



**የኢትዮጵያ ሀገራዊ ጉባኤ (ኢ. ሀ. ጉ.)**  
**ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (E N C)**

**Brief Background Information:**

The Ethiopian National Congress (ENC) was formed in October of 1997 in Atlanta, Georgia with a mission of uniting opposition political parties and promoting civil virtue and participation. The proliferations of political parties was causing a lot of confusion and misunderstanding at that time. However, soon after its establishment internal problems that beleaguered the organization emerged resulting in a split and fading away of interest among the larger members. The public understanding including many of the members of the concept of Congress Senate dichotomy contributed and brought about confusions, differing expectations and misunderstandings. The internal conflict followed by the split not only tarnished ENC's image but also left astray many of the followers. Many perceived ENC as a political party struggling for power. That was not however the case.

ENC's activities might have dealt with political issues and problems. Civic activities as it relates to the violation of human and democratic rights perpetuated by a political power perhaps presumed to be political in nature. Our activities simply deal with the creation of awareness of one's rights and affirming those rights with active and full civic participation. Of course, when we deal with problems and consequences caused by oppressive aspects of political action, advocacy and mobilization to change the oppressive aspects of that action will by necessity bring our civic activities to bear against such political actions.

The activities conducted by ENC before and after the split until May 2000 were focused entirely on bringing together fragmented political parties so as they become credible and democratic opposition to the current Ethiopian regime.



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Consequently, ENC sponsored, facilitated and conducted seven meetings (Two in 1998, Three 1999 and Two in 2000) involving 8-13 political parties.

Through such meetings a memorandum of understanding and minimum common program documents were developed and adapted. At this point ENC felt that the POs have reached a point where they can work toward their own unity. ENC helped create an Organizing Committee for All Party Conference. Through hard work and patience that took more than two years, the All Party Conference Organizing Committee succeeded in conducting a weeklong conference of 15 political parties in July 2003 and formed the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF).

After the formation of UEDF, ENC turned its attention to revising its mission, constitution and various organizational instruments. In its meeting of March 2003, the Executive Committee developed action plan in which among other things the revision of the constitution and incorporation of the organization with revised mission will be achieved. Revitalization of the organization with the focus of promoting civic involvement in the socio-economic and political affairs of the country was found to be imperative.

So far:

- ENC has been incorporated in the District of Columbia in February 2003.
- The revised Constitution has been adapted in May of 2004 at the sixth Congress of the ENC. With the revision of the constitution, the Congress vise avis Senate dichotomy was eliminated.
- Based on the revised constitution, ENC applied for a non-profit 501 (c) (3) status and the non-profit status was granted by IRS in 2006.
- A five part on line discussion on civic movements and their importance in enhancing democratic rights and maintenance of democratic rights has been published.
- Preparations and contacts were established with civic organizations like Ethiopian Free Journalists Association, Ethiopian Teachers Association and others and released a number of joint communiqués regarding the 2005 election until the free press was banned.
- Published its various press releases on important rights issues on its web site. Press Releases concerning democratic and human rights violations and supporting the formation of the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces were frequently released and published on the website,



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([www.ethiopiannationalcongress.org](http://www.ethiopiannationalcongress.org)). However, most internal communications as well as informational and educational activities took place through Internet forum [Derartu@topica.com](mailto:Derartu@topica.com) now renamed [Derartu@yahoo.com](mailto:Derartu@yahoo.com). Online discussion on civic movements and their importance in the democratic process was conducted from March to May of 2004.

- Organized numerous educational conferences and symposiums on issues including Ethio-Eritrea border conflict (the first of its kind); The first ETHIO-SOMALI FRIENDSHIP Conference to address long term people to people relations and strategies; to lay down foundations to work together on issues and problems arising in the region immediately after the war started; the importance of civic participation in creating democratic institutions; the importance of unity of fragmented political organizations in bringing peace and democracy to Ethiopia and on ways and means of promoting civic virtue, knowledge and participation in Ethiopia and the Diaspora.
- Facilitated and incubated the formation of Ethiopians for Justice now formally called Association for Justice and Accountability in Ethiopia.
- Initiated National Priorities Consultative Process (NPCP) with a vision of coordinating of activities with various civic groupings in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora to develop and promote effective and systematic civic education program activities.
- One of the most important achievements for ENC is surviving and continuing to address its mission albeit in a limited scale.

Given that a sustainable and stable democratic society can thrive only in an environment of civil protection of human and civil rights through challenging unjust and illegal practices, we hope to create a common understanding among civil societies, interested individuals and networks on the principles of civil society activities and their roles in democratising Ethiopian society. With that in view, the ENC is making a serious effort toward creating civil society awareness-raising program that addresses the issues and problems facing our country and achieve the following objectives.

- To organize seminars, workshops and symposiums for different civil society organizations including traditional ones with a purpose of developing common understandings, operational guidelines and frameworks for cooperation and unified action.



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- To Promote and strengthen National Priorities Consultative Process Initiative (NPCP) with a vision of coordinating of activities with various civic groupings in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora to develop and promote effective and systematic civic education program activities.
- To recruit and organize members to participate in the promotion of civic education and awareness that leads to the development of conscious community of people that can protect and defend their God given rights and the formation of Chapters in the Diaspora – Europe, Africa, North America and Australia as well as ENC’s presence in Ethiopia.
- To intervene and facilitate negotiations between democratic political forces whenever disputes over issues arise among themselves and /or when asked to intervene.